

“Military Forces for Self-Defense” Specified

– LDP Adopts New Draft Constitution –

JAPAN'S governing Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) has drafted a new constitution which clearly acknowledges the existence of “a military forces for self-defense.” The LDP draft allows Japan to exercise the “right to collective self-defense” and also authorizes the “use of force abroad” as part of Japan’s international peace-keeping cooperation activities. The LDP draft calls for revising the present Constitution’s Chapter II (including Article 9) titled the “Renunciation of War” to “National Security,” indicating a departure from the “exclusively defensive defense policy” which postwar Japan has firmly maintained as its basic national security policy.

This was the LDP’s first full draft of a new constitution containing articles.

Behind this lies the LDP’s judgment that discrepancies between reality and constitutional stipulations have reached the critical limit now that Japan has sent its Self-Defense Forces to Iraq to launch “full-fledged wartime activities in foreign territories.” One senior LDP lawmaker said, “It is a major challenge for Japan in the 21st century to become an ‘ordinary state’ by stopping the accumulation of reinterpretations of the Constitution that might effectively invalidate constitutional government.”

The LDP draft allows the use of the “military forces for self-defense” not only to cope with “contingencies in Japan” but also to “ensure the peace and safety of the international community,” paving the way for concerted action with US forces “in contingencies in areas surrounding Japan” and participation in multinational forces to settle armed conflicts abroad.

After seizing an overwhelming majority in the House of Representatives in the Sept. 11 general election, the LDP

intends to enact a law that will set the procedures for a national referendum required to revise the Constitution in the 2006 ordinary session of the Diet, and use the compiled LDP draft as a basis for speeding up discussions on its amendments. The opposition Democratic Party of Japan is also working on its own draft. Debate on constitutional revision is expected to heat up toward this fall when Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro’s term as LDP president will expire.

However, there remain issues to be discussed cautiously. The LDP draft retains the first clause of Article 9 that stipulates the “renunciation of war” but deletes the second clause on non-possession of war potential, which reflects Japan’s deep remorse over World War II. Many Asian countries are anxious about such constitutional revision. There are also voices of concern that Japan’s “military forces for self-defense” might be integrated into the US-led global strategies. Japan will be required to make clear both at home and abroad where it is heading through the constitutional revision.

Photo: The Mainichi Newspapers



Japanese Self-Defense Forces at a send-off ceremony before their departure for Iraq

Photo: Kyodo News



LDP has drafted a new constitution which clearly acknowledges the existence of “a military forces for self-defense”